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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR DEPT OF JUSTICE FOR DEBORAH GAYNUS
STATE FOR EUR/NB, EUR/ERA (URBAN), EB/CBA

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH NEW LITHUANIAN PROSECUTOR
GENERAL

Summary

1. Ambassador Mull and Lithuania's new Prosecutor General Algimantas Valantinas agreed January 17 to continue close bilateral cooperation in law enforcement and legal assistance, particularly to surmounting problems that may arise in extradition cases. The Ambassador thanked Valantinas for his office's assistance in favorably resolving the criminal case against two U.S. airmen in December. The Ambassador identified three key areas for special attention in bilateral cooperation - action against 1) trafficking in persons; 2) corruption; and 3) violations of intellectual property rights. Valantinas said he would welcome closer cooperation on those fronts, particularly in obtaining any training that might be available and in improving direct communication with prosecutors in the U.S. The youthful Valantinas appears principled and energetic, but he will likely have problems increasing the success rate of a prosecutorial bureaucracy that has not been particularly aggressive in pursuing corruption. End summary.

Open Channels

2. The Ambassador called on the newly-appointed Valantinas to brief him on extensive U.S.-Lithuanian law enforcement cooperation and to urge continued mutual support. He noted that the U.S. and Lithuania had signed an extradition treaty in 2005, and had already put it to work in arranging the extradition of a Lithuanian suspect to face trial in the U.S. He noted we remain hopeful that the United States would extradite suspected embezzler Gintaras Petrikas to Lithuania from Los Angeles, where he is now incarcerated, but noted that the court which had heard the case more than a year ago had still not made a decision. Despite the occasional delays in cases such as this and the differences in our legal systems, the Ambassador and Valantinas agreed that the United States and Lithuania now have an excellent foundation for legal cooperation in fighting crime. Both the Ambassador and Valantinas assured they would maintain open channels of communication in the event of any problems that develop in legal assistance. Valantinas said it would be especially helpful to be able to communicate directly with prosecutors in the United States as problems arise in legal assistance cases, something the Ambassador said the Embassy would be pleased to facilitate.

U.S. Airmen Case

3. The Ambassador thanked Valantinas for his office's support in managing the criminal charges against two U.S. airmen accused of disorderly conduct in Vilnius in December. (Note: In January, Valantinas's office agreed to our request to transfer jurisdiction in the case to U.S. military authorities. End note). Valantinas expressed regret that the process had lasted as long as it had, and expressed confidence that it had not damaged our bilateral relationship.

E-PINE Cooperation in Law Enforcement

4. Ambassador Mull briefed Valantinas on our eagerness to work with Lithuania within the framework of the Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe (E-PINE) in confronting regional law enforcement threats. The U.S. is particularly interested in law enforcement cooperation in the Nordic-Baltic region against: 1) corruption; 2) trafficking in persons; and 3) the violation of intellectual property rights. He noted that each of these three spheres have important prosecutorial components, and invited Valantinas to delegate representatives of his office to participate in training and other programs on these topics. Valantinas readily agreed.

Comment: A Good Start

15. The youthful Valantinas seems committed to energizing his office, improving its performance, and taking a more principled stand in law enforcement. But he will likely face a difficult task -- the office of the Prosecutor General has suffered in recent years from bureaucratic inertia and a less-than-stellar performance in prosecuting high-profile corruption cases.